

The Bloomfield Citizen.

SATURDAY, MARCH 26, 1887.

Art for Art's Sake.

The exhibition of the A. T. Stewart pictures at the American Art Galleries in New York has called for extended comment in newspapers throughout the country. Its tone is hardly favorable. Although the collection contains many gems of art, not a few of its pictures are commonplace; while the one most celebrated, the 1807, by Messier, is regarded with disappointment by most careful critics. Yet it is quite probable that the sale which is soon to follow will show prices if anything in advance of those paid by the original purchaser.

The position occupied by Art in this country is anomalous. The great mass of the people are just awakening to its importance. No large galleries are open where the taste may be cultivated by the sight of the masterpieces of past centuries. Paris has her Louvre, London her Royal galleries; Rome, Florence, Berlin, St. Petersburg each their vast collections of paintings, statuary, and bric-a-brac; while even the smaller cities are proud of their special museums, cathedrals adorned with many valuable pictures, and monuments to illustrious statesmen, scholars and soldiers.

In Italy the common people exhibit a critical taste for music, painting and sculpture of no mean order. That which has made the wealth of France is the taste shown in the products of her workshops.

The Anglo-Saxon race is not naturally artistic. Napoleon called the English, without no great injustice, a nation of "shop-keepers." Commerce has largely determined the national life, its foreign policy, and individual characteristics. Among the common class of people there has ever been a singular obtuseness to the beauties of nature. When an English poet called the attention of a country housewife to the noble mountain which rose from the valley where her cottage stood, she replied: "Yes, it will keep a thousand sheep." Many a rustic lad has no doubt wondered why an all-wise Providence has created mountains, while meadowland is so valuable, or sent such volumes of water over Niagara where little use can be made of the horse-power so ruthlessly wasted.

Yet in every nature there is a "remanent" to whom nature and art speak an intelligent language. They are not the patrons of art, the Meccenas, whose thousands are lavished upon the favorites of the multitude, but humble worshippers at the shrines of beauty. They desire not wealth, for art-culture has a money value; nor a field for the display of unusual knowledge, but they seek the pleasures of a gratified taste, and the development of mind and heart through their aesthetic nature.

For them America needs schools of art, museums, and the atmosphere of culture. When these are secured art will be sought for its own sake, as literature flourishes in the home of books and authors; and religion among Christian workers.

The art development of America is of vast importance to its progress in civilization. It comprehends improvements in architecture, music, public monuments, the care and preservation of historic buildings and natural scenery, the beautifying of the home, its furniture, utensils, and adornments, the adaptation of dress to individual wants, and above all the development of humanity in the direction of increased love for the refinements which soften the heart and promote a dignified and courteous exchange of civilities. The world has perhaps received its highest material development, but it is still very far from that civilization which religion and culture can impart. Religion and art are worth seeking after, not because they are fashionable, but for their own sakes as developers of civilization, and conservators of the good there is in the world.

Shade Trees.

Next to the improvement of our much neglected sidewalks, the planting and care of shade trees is a matter that should awaken a prompt and widespread public interest in Bloomfield. At the lowest estimate as to number, 2,000 shade trees ought to be set out on the streets of Bloomfield this season.

The grading of Broad Street, compelling a considerable cut above Canal Street for a long distance, necessitates the destruction of the trees that now stand in that locality. When these are cut down and converted into kindling wood the loss will be fully felt. It will require the planting of not less than 500 trees to put this part of Broad Street in proper trim in this important particular, and then it will take a dozen years for the young trees to develop much of utility or beauty. But it will pay handsomely.

The Village Improvement Association should at once take this matter in hand. "Arbor Day" (which we believe has never been observed in Bloomfield) ought not to pass without some such revival of tree-planting as occurred about sixty years ago, and to which we owe the beautiful elms that surround the Green and line the sides of the older streets of the village. A fund of \$1,000 would be ample to purchase at wholesale from 1,500 to 2,000 trees of good size and of the best sort. If the Society is a live society it could raise that sum in less than a week. Then as to the planting: On the Arbor Day plan of "many hands make light work," the cost of planting would be saved, and we would have a day that would be historic. Could \$1,000 be better invested? What have the gentlemen of the Village Improvement Association to say?

Charity. What is it?

There is hardly a word in the English language that has so many interpretations as "Charity," and the peculiarity of this diverse interpretation is, that it arises from no ambiguity in the word itself but from the nature and animus of the man using it. "No man," said the late Henry Ward Beecher "is more intolerant than a Christian backed up by his conscience," and yet charity, fully defined, is one of the principal doctrines of Christianity. The fact that it is a principal doctrine of Christianity compels the professing Christian, who desires still to practice some things that might otherwise clash with his professions, to put his own pet construction on "Charity," that he may be justified in his own eyes. It is not the purpose of this letter to define, or attempt to define charity, but simply to ask some good brother, who finds it consistent with "Charity" to treasure up a man's offences for years and bring them up against him when he endeavors to mend his ways, and asks assistance in so doing, and use them as a club to knock him back to the place whence he is endeavoring to escape, what is this "Charity" that you profess to practice?

I simply want to know the definition of the charity that warrants its professor in revenging himself upon those that he thinks have injured or slighted him, that warrants one man in setting himself up as a judge over his neighbor and condemning him, that teaches never to forgive or to forget. What is it?

It cannot be that men high in the Christian church can refuse to forgive or forget, can refuse to be reconciled to an erring brother, can refuse to hold out a helping hand to any one trying to do better or believe any good of one who has once fallen, can refuse to believe a man who says I want to get up again; help me, as they do right here in our midst, without attempting at least to reconcile it with the fundamental doctrine of charity. Now what interests me is, what peculiar definition of the word makes all this "Charity?"

Of desultory reading, Mr. Frederic Harrison wisely says:—A habit of reading idly debilitates and corrupts the mind for all wholesome reading; the habit of reading wisely is one of the difficult habits to acquire, needing strong resolution and infinite pains; and reading for mere reading's sake, instead of for the good we gain from reading, is one of the worst and commonest and most unwholesome habits we have.

It is not usual to have books in reception rooms, except indeed such books as would be better in the ash-barrel, gaudily bound annuals and presentation books and such ruff of literature-garbage upon which even a goat of an enquiring turn of mind would starve. The mere titles of books often suggest conversation. On this subject Mrs. Orrin Smith writes:—"What sweeter companion can be had than books all about, here, there and everywhere, within reach, and in most convenient spots! The varied tone of books soberly bound, make a rich bit of decoration, and suggest consolation and calmness. Recresses filled with book-shelves affectionately open, treated as delicately and ornamentally as may be chosen, cannot but look suitable anywhere, and if well-filled, must be proper and comfortable. It cannot but be considered discomfort to concentrate the principal imaginative luxury of life in one apartment, often times remote and gloomy. It is a rare case for any one to possess enough real sterling books to make separate apartments for them necessary. Glazed book-cases interfere with easy access, and are therefore undesirable. A certain worn look about the outsides and insides of books is better than brand new-gloss, and shows them to be old familiar friends."

The New Jersey Unionist is engaged in raising a testimonial fund of "nickels, dimes and dollars," in behalf of John Donohue, member of the Assembly, "in recognition of his unswerving fidelity to principle" in the recent Senatorial contest.

ROSES OF SOUND.

Oh, what celestial art,
And how sweet thoughts become pure tone and float.
All music, into the transcendent mind and heart;
Her hand scarce stirs the strings, wily metal—
Hear from the wild rose fall each perfect petal!
And can we have, on earth, of heaven the whole?
Heard thoughts—the soul of inexpressible thought.
Roses of sound
That strew melodious leaves upon the silent ground.
And music that is music's very soul,
Without one touch of earth—
Too tender, even, for sorrow, too bright for mirth!

—R. W. Gilder in The Century.

Smiles as a Means of Expression.

In the first place, there is the presentation smile of society. You are presented to a lady, who not only bows to show that she puts herself at your feet, and perhaps gives her hand to show that she does not mean to put hair or scratch (I still follow the doubtless correct evolution theory of ceremonials), but she "smiles and smiles" to show that her mood is one of sweet amiability, and that you are therefore, for the present, safe. Then there is the pretty, pearly, rippling laugh, with which your "nut brown" anecdote, which has been heard already twice this evening, is received. Here, certainly, there is no pent up cascade of emotion that seeks for an outlet. The sweet lady's laugh is partly for your sake, that you may feel the soft thrill of self-approval as you pass it on to some one else who knows she laughs well. She pulls it exactly as if it were a stop in an organ.

Then there is the bitter laugh of the soul and the raven, who wishes to impress upon your mind the hollowness that all things have for him; and the well-managed smile of Jacques, the elder cynic, who thinks thus to wither your youthful aspirations and at the same time to suggest his own unfathomable depths of cruel disillusion.—Atlantic Monthly Contributor's Club.

Cannibalism of Rats.

At South Kensington the loveliest suburb of London, the inhabitants are suffering from an immense influx of rats, and no Pied Piper of Hamelin can rid them of the pests. It is in this pretty spot that the annual exhibitions are held, when, with an enormous attendance, the consumption of viands is on a gargantuan scale. At such periods the rodents will not look at a trap but live on the fat of the land, but when the exhibition is closed and the edibles of all kinds have been removed, they become reckless, and rush into the traps as fast as they are set, paying no attention to their situation until they have devoured the bait. When their hunger has endured some days, they revert to cannibalism, falling always upon the young and weak members of the rat community, and destroying them so utterly that, Nature says, at the present time there cannot be found a single young rat in the building.—San Francisco Chronicle.

The American and the Oriental.

The eastern fatalist not only submits to misfortune without a murmur, but faces death with iron composure. He has the mind of Hamlet concerning it: "If it be now, it will be now; if it be not now, yet it will come. The readiness is all!" The American, on the other hand, in his eagerness to set the whole world right, quarrels with inevitable disaster, as with trivial wrongs, and is too often ready to call on God to explain to his satisfaction the mysterious workings of the universe. Even with the help of his Christianity, his behavior is often that of a petulant child compared with the grave submission of the Asiatic to destiny.—Youth's Companion.

Smoking Cars Demoralizing.

A Boston man who travels to and from his home on a railroad thought that the effect of daily riding in the filthy smoking cars of the road must have a demoralizing effect. So he investigated and in time established the following facts: The proportion of men who come to town in the morning with unshaven faces is 5 per cent. greater in the smoking than in the other cars, and that of men whose boots are unlaced 6 1-2 per cent. more in the former than it is in the latter.—New York Sun.

There are only twenty-four Japanese residents in New York city.

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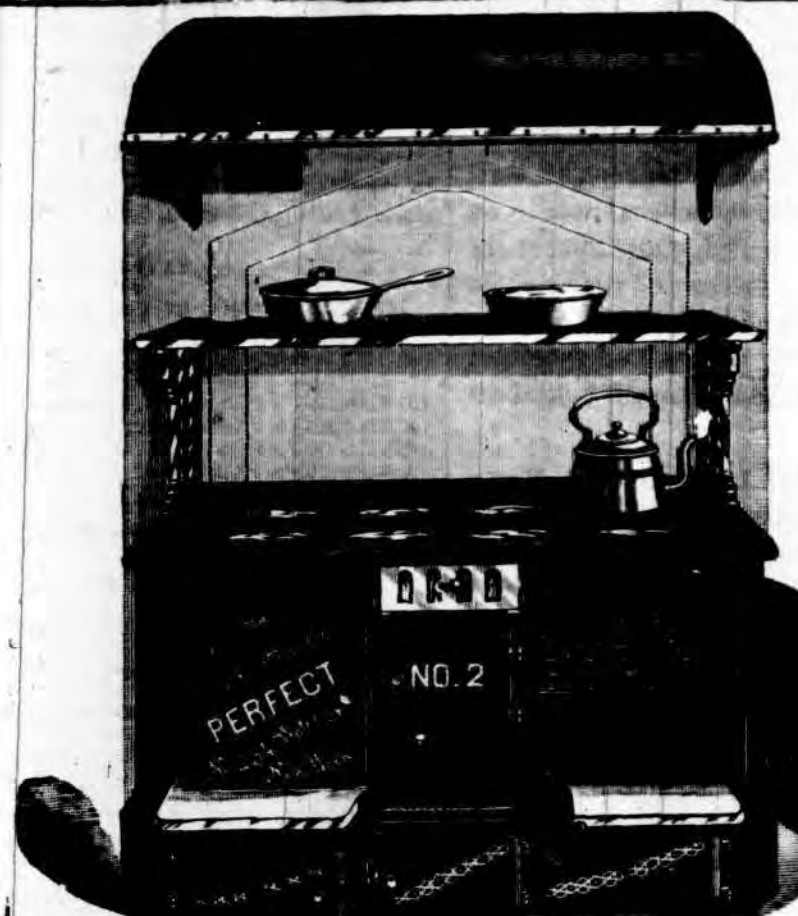
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